

I'm sorry this has taken me such a long time to complete. It's not that I didn't want to do this, but I find it hard to put into words the memories, feelings, friendships and the beauty that is Backcountry. I strongly feel more women should be a part of such a liberating and empowering program. Please let me know what I can do to increase women's participation.

Backcountry...it's been four months since the season ended and I'm still not sure where to begin. I find it hard to reflect on a part of my life which in some ways has ended, but in so many others continues to shape me. What is it about Backcountry and why is it that I miss it so much? Could it be the friendships I made? The people I talk to or email every week, those who I have seen after the season and those who, unfortunately, I most likely will not see again. Is it the feeling I get when I talk one of my Backcountry friends and it seems like just yesterday when we were talking at the water filter at State Lakes or warming ourselves at the fire at Sphinx? Or is it just knowing there will always be a unique and irreplaceable Backcountry bond connecting our lives.

Maybe it's that I miss learning new skills daily or discovering how my presence affects the wilderness? As I start the application process for summer trail jobs, I realize how many skills I acquired in the 5 months I spent in Kings Canyon. Everyday I learned something about working trails. From lopping brush, to building rock structures, to using a chainsaw, I gained important skills which make it possible for humans to experience and enjoy precious wilderness areas without destroying them.

Perhaps, most of all, I miss the high treeless mountains, beautiful waterfalls, lush meadows, indigo lakes, massive trees and delicate wildflowers I saw and all of which slowly became a part of my life. Or maybe it's the sensation I felt after diving into cold, blue, crystal lakes and laying on warm rocks to dry my body. Or could it be the smell of the mint, sage and wildflowers in Simpson Meadow. Or maybe it's that my eyes miss watching the snow quickly cover the forest floor or the sky changing as a late season storm rolls into Dusy Basin. Maybe it's my ears that miss the sound of the rain beating on my tent or the hail hitting my hard hat.

Maybe it's the consciousness I gained about my lifestyle and how I affect Mother Earth? The wonderful awareness I found that everything in this world is connected. Knowing that despite living in a culture where virtually everything is disposable, our world is not. Changing myself and taking steps to ensure that I am living consciously and being deliberate in the choices I make, Kings Canyon continues to shape my life.

I realize I have a romanticized view about my experiences. Still, with that in mind, I have a difficult time remembering what I did not like? The good days and the wonderfully vivid memories I have, will always outweigh the days I did not want to work or the brief period I wanted to quit. Through pictures and memories, Backcountry is a part of my life I often revisit, sadly knowing that for me, it cannot be recreated. Backcountry has changed me. I think it has changed, in some way, everyone fortunate enough to be a part of this program.

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